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**SB499 - AN ACT CONCERNING PARKING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.**

Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera, and members of the Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. My name is Armand Legault from Newington. I am a board member of the Greater Hartford Muscular Dystrophy Association and several other disability related committees. I am here to testify on SB499 – AN ACT CONCERNING PARKING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

I have Muscular Dystrophy, use a power wheelchair, and a current holder of a handicapped parking permit. This permit allows me to enter and exit my ramp van which needs a wider parking space. I was able to drive my own specially equipped ramp van for twenty nine years. Because my disability has progressed, I am no longer able to drive. If this current bill as written is passed, I will lose the privilege of obtaining a lifetime handicapped parking permit since I no longer have an operator's license. Thousands of people with disabilities are unable to drive but still need a handicapped parking permit.

This bill, in my opinion, is to *curb the abuse* of parking permits for people with disabilities. I am in favor of this bill, provided a few changes are made, some of which I will explain. First, I feel the placard should contain a photo ID. This would discourage the use of the placard by others who do not need the special parking privilege. I currently have at least three placards floating around this state because they were stolen out of my van. In every case I would just go to the Department of Motor Vehicle and they would just issue me another placard. Second, the temporary placard, colored red, should have in bold letters the expiration date in lieu of a photo ID. Third, the expiration date on a permanent placard should either be tied to the operator's license or a state identification card.

I am strongly in favor of establishing an online program allowing members of the public to file complaints of violations of the privilege of parking in the assigned areas for persons with disabilities. Equally important to this is requiring this act to include a strengthened false statement provision and an increased penalty for false statement with respect to a certification of disability from a licensed physician or advanced practice registered nurse. The recall procedure needs to have a specific date to insure that all enforcement agencies can identify from that date forward fraudulent use of the old placards.

I applaud your efforts to crack down on the abuse of the handicapped parking permits, and I strongly encourage you to consider the changes I have suggested.